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Identification of Leadership Styles in The Pre-University Educational System. Case Study.

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Abstract

The present research focuses on creating a typology of leadership style practiced in the pre-university education institutions in Romania, starting from the assumption that every teacher becomes a leader in relation to the classroom. We used the quantitative study, through the semi-standardized questionnaire, applied face to the face, by interviewers, on a sample of 507 persons from 97 pre-university education institutions in South Muntenia development region, from Romania. In the process of personal development, defining their own leadership style is a sure way to understand ourselves and to interact with those around us. After processing the data it was found out that in terms of leadership style existent in the pre-university education in the region studied the collaborative style prevails by a majority of 68%, facilitative style 18% and 14% the authoritarian style. The main conclusion of the study is that understanding and leadership practicing are particularly important for the sustainable development of the Romanian pre-university education

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Keywords: education, educational field, leader, leadership, performance, vision.

1. Introduction

The leadership styles inspire people with an extended vision on the world, help to clarify some concrete goals, motivate people and help them communicate well with their team. In spite of this, we can not talk about a recipe that leaders follow.

There are leaders influence on their team, who think and act like them. But it is not known which type of manager has more influence on employees. The authoritarian leader seeks to have „subordinates” around him (Bennis & Nanus, 1985). He can find people who accept to be pushed from behind and the results can be good for

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short term. But the working atmosphere will be never pleasant and it is likely to lose the employees with ability for their position, who will seek work elsewhere. It is desirable for the leader to be respected.

The organizations have value if they create leaders, people you follow their ambitions (Bennis & Nanus, 2000). It is necessary to respect that leader or you will not work and you will stand at the first opportunity. The current system of education in our country is the result of creative exploitation of valuable traditions that crystallized over a long historical evolution.

The restructuring and innovations that were brought to them lately were determined on the one hand by the profound changes in the economic and social life of the country, and on the other hand the internal laws of the system operation. It is a natural part of the human nature to seek behavioural patterns that people follow that inspire trust and confidence. To a large extent, it is a natural talent of people to be leaders. But the individual qualities of leadership can be improved and the education system is the key for this improvement.

2. Methods

As a research method we used the quantitative study, through the semi-standardized questionnaire, applied face to the face, by interviewers.

The study was made on a sample of 507 persons from 97 pre-university education institutions in South Muntenia development region, divided into five age groups. The questionnaire consists of 13 questions, including: filter questions, communication within the team, delegating tasks, decision making, how to involve in solving tasks.

Each question has three possible answers, which is given a number of points. A score between 31-36 points represents facilitative style, between 19-30 points collaborative style and between 12-18 points is leadership style is defined as authoritarian (controlling) one.

The sample was selected with a statistical step of sampling based on studies, specializations obtained by studies, position held in the education institution, in order to provide a representative sample in terms of age groups and responsibilities of the position, that lead to behaviours and attitudes specific to leadership.

3. Findings and results

3.1. Characteristics of the educational system in South Muntenia Region

The data regarding the infrastructure for education at national level and in South-Muntenia Region in year 2013, for different levels of education in a cumulative way on the two urban and rural areas are shown in table 1.

The educational system, both at national level and at South-Muntenia Region level, includes the infrastructure for education, represented by buildings in which education operates, respectively kindergartens, schools, colleges, universities and locations for vocational and special education. It can be argued that the school infrastructure is well represented in the region and thus it can support the development in good conditions of education, noting that in the rural area, this type of social infrastructure may be considered inappropriate for the rural development process, requiring a restructuring of the school structures and investment projects correlated to the local needs and requirements. The data regarding the infrastructure for education at the national level and at South Muntenia level in 2013, for different levels of education cumulatively on the two urban and rural areas are shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Structure, on counties, of the education units, in South-Muntenia Region, year 2013

Development region/County	Kindergartens		Schools		Vocational schools		High schools		Post schools		high Faculties	
	nr	%	nr	%	nr	%	nr	%	nr	%	nr	%
Romania	1367	100,0	4022	100,0	6	100,0	1615	100,0	86	100,0	108	100,0
South-Muntenia Region	145	10,6	684	17,0	1	16,7	210	13,0	12	14,0	4	3,7

Argeș	25	1,8	128	3,2	-	-	45	2,8	2	2,3	2	1,9
Călărași	16	1,2	65	1,6	-	-	17	1,1	1	1,2	-	-
Dâmbovița	18	1,3	106	2,6	-	-	31	1,9	-	-	1	0,9
Giurgiu	6	0,4	66	1,6	-	-	13	0,8	1	1,2	-	-
Ialomița	20	1,5	75	1,9	-	-	27	1,7	1	1,2	-	-
Prahova	41	3,0	137	3,4	1	16,7	54	3,3	6	7,0	1	0,9
Teleorman	19	1,4	107	2,7	-	-	23	1,4	1	1,2	-	-

Processed according to: South Muntenia Regional Development Agency, Update 2013, Regional Development Plan 2007-2013.

The percentage of schools in the region is represented as follows: 0.15% for primary and education and 99.85% for secondary education compared to the national level where the share was 1.29% respectively 98.71%. Prahova county is remarked with: the largest number of kindergartens 41 units, the most secondary education schools - 137 schools, as well as the most high schools throughout the whole region, and 54 high schools and 6 post-high schools in 2013 Arges county is remarked, however, with the largest number of faculties, respectively 2 high education institutions.

3.2. Presentation of the analyzed leadership styles

We can not talk about a recipe that leaders follow. In some cases, depending on the unpredictability of some circumstances, leaders must show flexibility in adapting to a different style of leadership to the one that he shows constantly.

Participative/collaborative leadership style. Although participative leaders make the final decision when it is about a project, they include the team members in the decision. They encourage the creativity and their employees are often involved in the team projects. There are a number of advantages of the participative leader (Zlate Mielu, 2004). Their employees have a high degree of satisfaction in the work place and they are productive because they can involve in the group decisions. They feel that they control their own destiny, so they are motivated to work for more than the financial reward. Because participation takes time, this approach is often seen in long-term tasks, but the result is generally positive. The disadvantages of this type of leadership are that sometimes the participative management can hinder situations where speed and efficiency are essential (Cretu D., et al. 2008). For example, during a crisis, the team may lose time to listen to the opinions of each participant. Another disadvantage is that not all team members can provide satisfactory support every time.

The facilitative leadership style. Facultative leaders calls in most cases the solutions proposed by the team, but they follow the rules strictly and they ensure that their employees follow each procedure accurately. This is the most appropriate leadership style when the work place implies a high risk factor (Zlate Mielu, 2004). In most cases, leaders assume this position because of their ability to comply with the rules and to support them strongly and less because of their qualifications or performance. This causes resentment when their team members do not appreciate the advice. They are efficient in motivating others to come up with ideas but there are certain situations when the team needs to be more authoritarian or collaborative, where appropriate, especially when it is directly involved in making a decision or when it has the best technical expertise of all team members (Cretu, et al. 2008).

The authoritarian leadership style. It is an extreme form of facilitative leadership style, noting that in this case the leaders have complete power over their employees. The staff and team members rarely have the opportunity to make suggestions or to talk about a task, even if they would be in the interest of the organization. The biggest advantage is that leadership style proves incredibly efficient (Tannenbaum and Warren, Schmidt, 2009). The decisions are made rapidly, and the work is done easily. The biggest disadvantage consists of the fact that few people will be treated in this way by their boss. So, where we meet this leadership style, we find also a series of twist of situations related to absent and rapid resignations. However, the style proves useful for the routine works.

3.3. Presentation of the interviewed sample

In figure 1, it is shown the age structure and in Figure 2, the level of interviewees education. Teaching staff from primary, secondary and post high school were interviewed, and their educational level was at least high school, as shown in Figure 3.

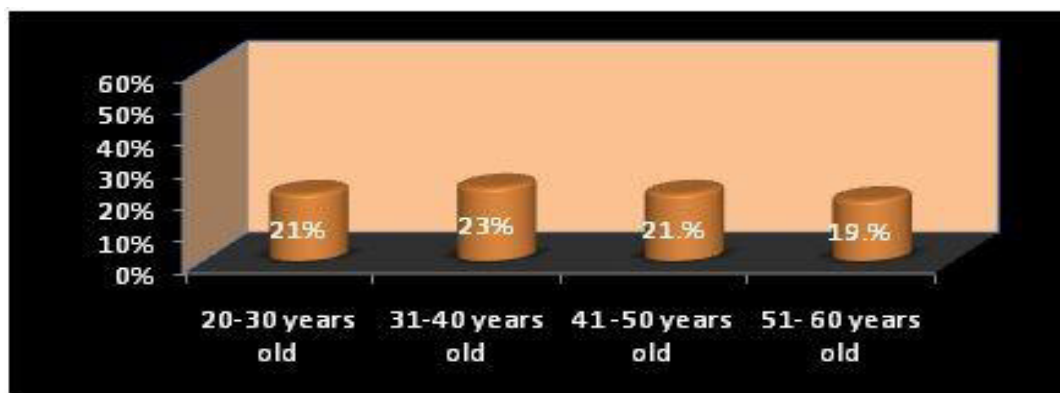


Figure 1. The respondents' age

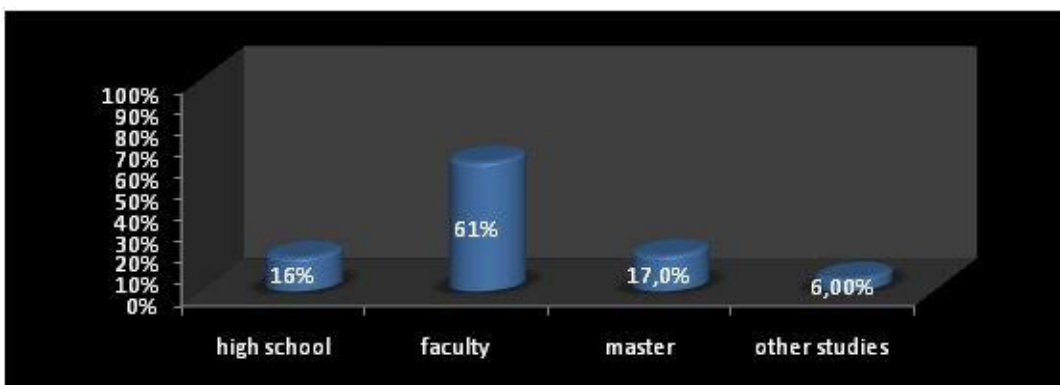


Figure 2. Level of the respondents studies

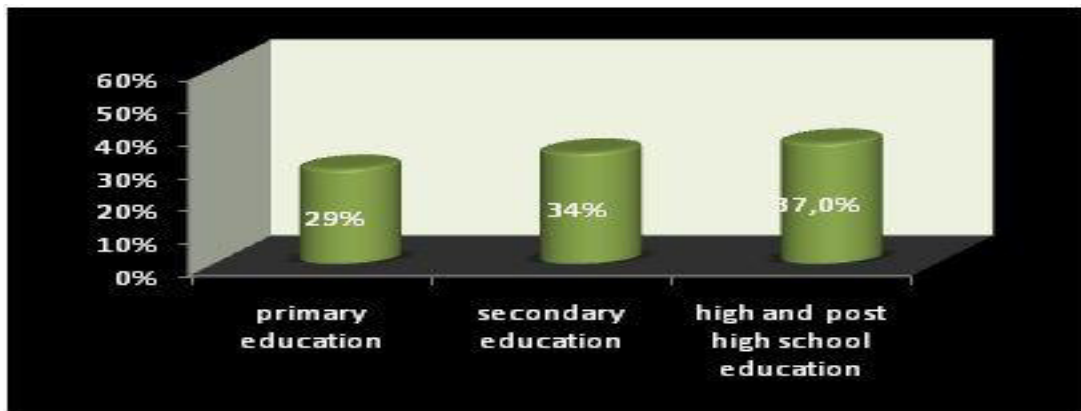


Figure 3. Respondents structure, on education cycles

3.4. Presentation of the questionnaire and obtained results/questions.

At the question, when I discuss a difficult problem with my team, the answer options were:

- a) I express my opinion and I provide a solution;
- b) I listen first to the others' opinions and I suggest a solution of mutual agreement;
- c) I ask for people's opinion and I summarize what I heard.

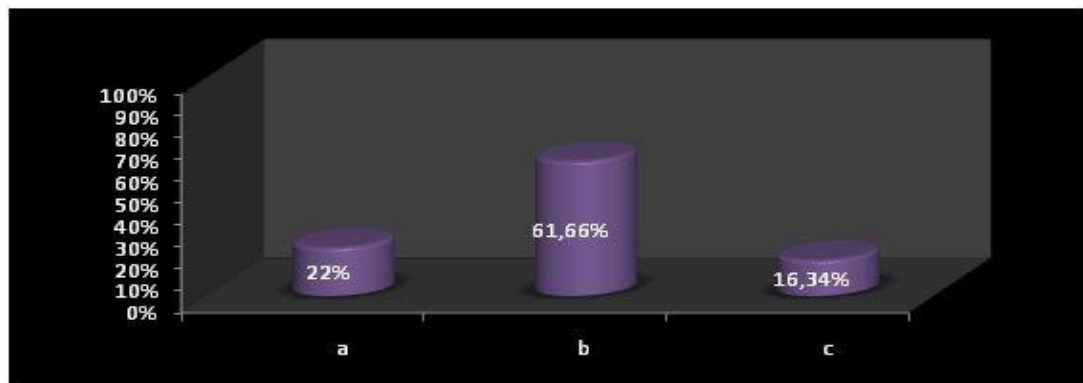


Fig. 4. Quantification of the answers obtained

The question, if the subordinates do not come to the established meetings, the options were:

- a) 15%, I call them all providing them some motivations to participate, and ask them what should happen;
- b) 53.34% I go to each team member and ask him solutions how he would improve his participations in the meetings, then decide what to do;
- c) 31.66% I send a note to all team members and I tell them that the participation in the meetings is mandatory.

At the question, in a meeting with my team I feel the best when:

- a) 90% answered that they listen, ask questions and collect solutions from the team;
- b) 5% present something or somebody presents something;
- c) 5% allow someone else to lead the meeting, and they participate as team members.

At the question, in order to be sure that the subordinates follow the correct objectives:

- a) 36.66% collaborates with the team in order to determine which will be the objectives;
- b) 38.34% presents to the team the objectives received from top management and allow the team to arrange objectives;
- c) 25% communicate the objectives which the team wants to achieve in accordance with those received from top management.

The statement, when I chair a brainstorming, had as answer options:

- a) I like to remain neutral while the rest come up with ideas;
- b) I am very tempted and I abstain hardly to interfere with own ideas;
- c) I provide an occasional input and then retire in the neutral zone.

The results obtained are shown in figure 5.

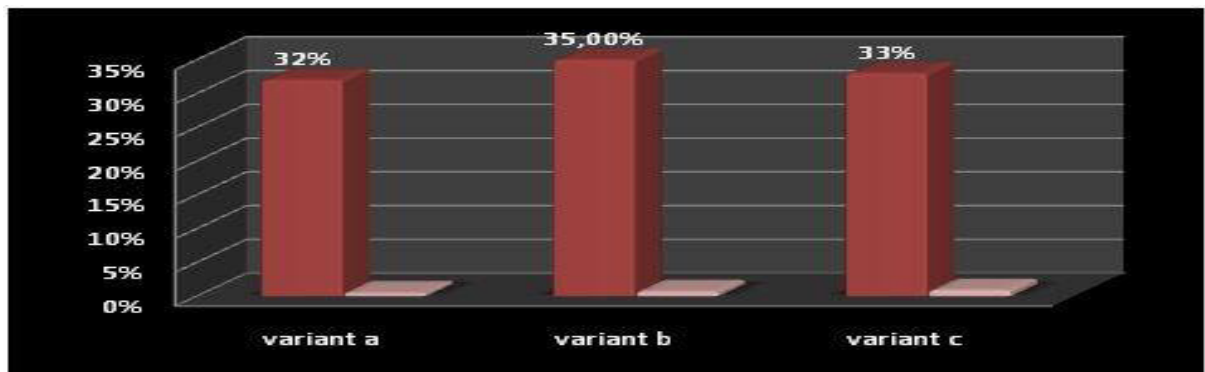


Figure 5. Obtained results

At the question, when I participate in a meeting:

- a) 45% answered, I state with determination my opinions;
- b) 38.33%, I am able to present both my opinions and the group opinions;
- c) 16.67%, I am able to use the others' ideas in order to find new solutions to problems.

At the question, when the team reach a conclusion I do not agree to:

- a) 6.66% say to the group that they agree to the respective conclusion;
- b) 85% asks the team to analyze again the facts based on some arguments they present;
- c) 8.34% agree to the conclusion and decision even they do not agree 100%.

At the question, when I know very well a problem that the team faces to:

- a) 75%, help the team to find the solution but remain neutral and interfere only if it is needed;
- b) 15%, allow someone else to chair the discussion and act as an usual member;
- c) 10% influence the team with the approach and with the recommendations while they chair the discussion.

3.5. Interpretation of the questionnaire.

If 31-36 points were obtained **the style is facilitative** (Mc Gregor, 2008). The Leader uses in most cases the solutions proposed by the team, he even allows the team to make decisions. He is efficient in motivating others to come up with ideas but he should not forget that there are certain situations when the team needs to be more authoritarian or collaborative, where appropriate, especially when he is directly involved in making a decision or when he has the best technical expertise of all team members.

If the score is between 19-30 points **the leader is collaborative** (Mc Gregor, 2008). He tends to bring his own ideas but also he uses the team contributions. He is interested of course, in the general objective, but equally in the relationships with the team members. There are cases when he stays neutral, leaving certain ideas to be implemented. Directions of improvement are those of understanding the complex real situations and adopting the best leadership style.

If the score obtained is between 12 to 18 points, **the leadership style is defined as authoritarian/controlling** (Mc Gregor, 2008). There are benefits of the authoritarian style, but in a changing area that requires people to adapt and support the team. This style can remove the leader, even from objective aimed. Sometimes he has the impression that the whole responsibility falls on his shoulders. In some cases, the other two leadership styles: collaborative and facilitative can make him close to the objective followed by the people he leads. For example, in situations when he needs ideas and solutions from experts in the team or from the people who know better the situations. Knowing the leadership styles focused on facilitating and collaboration, the leaders can better motivate people and they can become more influential.

The interpretation of the obtained answers, and the identification of the leadership styles, on types of education institutions that participated in the survey are shown in table 2.

Tab.2.Leadership styles, on education institutions participating in the survey

TYPE OF EDUCATION INSTITUTION	LEADERSHIP STYLES		
	AUTHORITARIAN (respondents' percent)	COLLABORATIVE (respondents' percent)	FACILITATIVE (respondents' percent)
1.PRIMARY	26%	54%	20%
2. SECONDARY	11%	67%	22%
3. HIGH SCHOOL AND POST HIGH SCHOOL	5%	83%	12%
PERCENTS AVERAGE	14%	68%	18%

It is noted that, by level of education, the percentage is held by the authoritarian style, at the primary level; at the collaborative style, high school and post high school level; and facilitative style, at the secondary level. The respondents' level of education is more advanced, the cooperation prevails among the members of the organization. If a subordinate is less prepared or uncertain, he tends to be fearful in front of an authoritarian leader.

The predominant leadership style at all levels of pre-university education, is the collaborative one, which is due to the specific activities to be addressed.

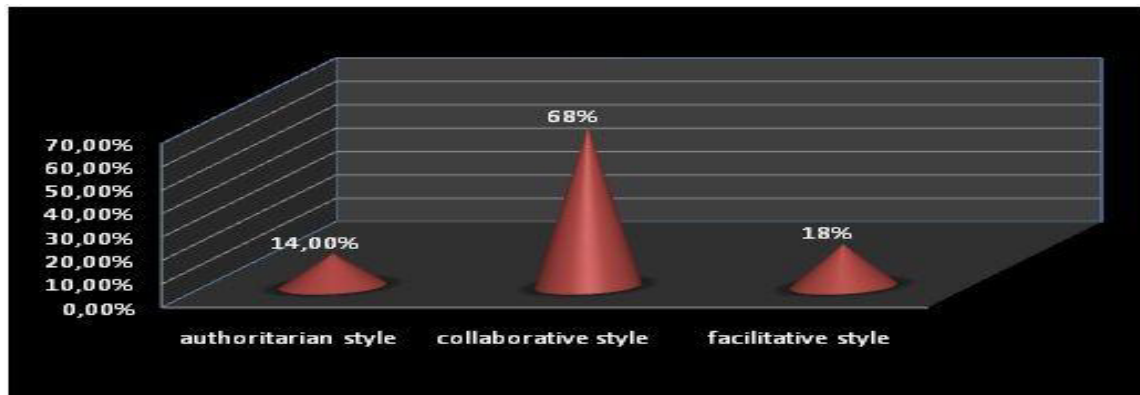


Figure 6. Leadership styles, in the pre-university education in South Muntenia Region

After processing the data it was found out that in terms of leadership style existent in the pre-university education in the region studied the collaborative style prevails by a majority of 68%, facilitative style 18% and 14% the authoritarian style.

4. Conclusions

The biggest challenge the educational systems will face in the future is to provide a satisfactory answer to the educational needs of an unpredictable world that is changing in an accelerated way and that the society demands more in terms of quality. Because leadership is a principle of quality management, it must be understood its importance for education, the difference between leadership and management, efficient communication in leadership, and the difference between competition and collaboration, to face the challenges in the Romanian society.

There are leaders who prefer to be respected, but there are others who have a tougher attitude. There may be feared and respected leaders in the same time and in some cases they complement happily. It depends on circumstantial factors.

Regarding the influence of leadership styles on team, it depends on how employees react to a style or another, and the situation in which the organization is, its image in the community. A well-trained employee and more knowledge is likely to perform better with a "collaborative" leadership style, when he is given the chance to participate in decision making, which may motivate him more (Crețu, Iova 2010). On the other hand, in most cases, a mediocre employee requires close supervision and a direct driving manner, therefore, authoritarian leadership style.

Leaders form their teams according to their likeness. From the point of view of some specialists time (Tichy, Noel, Cohen, 2000; Maxwell, John, 2010), a collaborative, participative leadership, works only with teams able to develop ideas and put them into practice. But if employees are one of those that need to be pushed from behind, then they need authoritarian leaders. 56% of the respondents say that the authoritarian leader is respected by people, but he will always have problems when he will introduce new rules. It takes time and many explanations, because people resist change and for performance in education you should ensure that employees will voluntarily change. Changes affecting the personal comfort of the employees are imposed by the leader, they do not make for themselves. Therefore, there are also situations in which collaborative leader has an authoritarian behaviour and unequivocally. In some cases, depending on the unpredictability of some circumstances, leaders must show flexibility in adopting a different style of leadership compared to the one that he shows constantly.

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